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INFO RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES  
RUEHZG/NATO EU COLLECTIVE  
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL 0047

C O N F I D E N T I A L LISBON 002911

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STATE FOR EUR/ERA AND PM

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/13/2017  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [PGOV](#) [PO](#)  
SUBJECT: MINISTERS CONFIRM, ATTEMPT TO EXPLAIN, PORTUGUESE  
DRAWDOWN IN AFGHANISTAN

REF: A. LISBON 2882

[1](#)B. USDAO IIR 6879001608 DTG 021819ZNOV07

Classified By: Ambassador Alfred Hoffman for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D)

[1](#)1. (C/NF) Summary: In conversations with Ambassador Minister of Defense Severiano Teixeira and Minister of Foreign Affairs Amado confirmed that Portugal intended to draw down its contributions to ISAF by August 2008. The Defense Minister portrayed this move as a "different kind of commitment," and gave Ambassador Hoffman details on GOP plans for continued engagement. Amado, however, was tellingly curt in expressing his disagreement with the decision and told the Ambassador in private that it was a political decision that he "didn't understand." Confirming what we have heard from other sources (reftels), both intimated that President Cavaco Silva was behind the decision. End summary.

[1](#)2. (C/NF) Ambassador Hoffman spoke to Minister of Defense Nuno Severiano Teixeira on November 9, and Minister of Foreign Affairs Luis Amado on November 13 to protest reports that Portugal planned to decrease its contribution to ISAF by August 2008. Both ministers confirmed that the reports were true. Both ministers claimed to have opposed the decision, hinting very broadly that President Cavaco Silva was behind it and had pushed it through during the most recent meeting of the National Defense Council (a body that includes, among others, both ministers, the President, the Prime Minister, and the Chiefs of Staff of the service branches).

[1](#)3. (C/NF) Severiano Teixeira characterized the decision as a way in which Portugal planned to "continue to contribute." He denied that "battle fatigue" played any role in the decision, saying that it was taken for "political reasons," since "the President, as Commander-in-Chief, sets the agenda." Severiano Teixeira said that the current plans call for Portugal to deploy in January of 08 an OMLT it committed to in the fall, and then withdraw its commandos (some 130 persons) by August of 08. Withdrawal of the commandos would coincide with the deployment of a C-130 and crew. The Defense Minister protested that Portugal's commitment to ISAF had not wavered; it was just contributing in a different way. Portugal would also continue to "think about" committing to lead more OMLTs. He said he must report on how this plan will be implemented at the next meeting of the National Defense Council (which has not been scheduled).

[1](#)4. (C/NF) At a November 13 goodbye lunch he hosted for the Ambassador, Foreign Minister Amado's response to the Ambassador's query on why this decision was taken and why NATO was not consulted was tellingly curt. "Mr. Ambassador, you know my position," he said, "I think this sends the wrong

signal at the wrong time." Ambassador then informed the minister that he would be bringing this issue up during his farewell call on the President. The minister nodded but said nothing.

15. (C/NF) In an one-on-one as they walked out, Amado told the Ambassador that he, the Minister of Defense, and the Prime Minister had been taken by surprise when the drawdown came up in the National Defense Council. He further noted that it was a "political decision," but one that he "didn't understand."

16. (C/NF) Comment: It is increasingly clear to us that virtually the entire senior civilian and military leadership was unhappy with the drawdown decision and that President Cavaco Silva was the driving force behind it. Ambassador Hoffman will raise this soonest with the President's Senior Diplomatic Advisor and, of course, will bring this issue up in his farewell call on the President. End Comment.  
Hoffman